United States
Environmental
Protection Agency
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Solid Waste
and Emergency
Response (5101)

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September 1997

Regional Brownfields Assessment Pilot

Danbury, CT

Outreach and Special Projects Staff (5101) | Quick Reference Fact Sheet

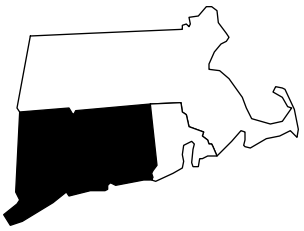
EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower States, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is a site, or portion thereof, that has actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment or reuse. Since 1995, EPA has funded more than 120 National and Regional Brownfields Assessment Pilots, at up to $200,000 each, to support creative two-year explorations and demonstrations of brownfields solutions. The Pilots are intended to provide EPA, States, Tribes, municipalities, and communities with useful information and strategies as they continue to seek new methods to promote a unified approach to site assessment, environmental cleanup, and redevelopment.

BACKGROUND

EPA Region 1 has selected the City of Danbury for a Regional Brownfields Pilot. Danbury, the hub of northern Fairfield County, is a former hat-manufacturing center turned corporate base and residential suburban community. Hat-making and related industries were the City's primary economic force until the 1960s. The City is long known for its Irish, Italian, and Portuguese immigrant communities, and has witnessed a growing Hispanic and Asian population. As of 1996, Danbury contains a labor force of approximately 35,000 with a 5% unemployment rate.

The Pilot project targets a one half-acre property that formerly contained a 4,400 square foot factory and a 3,100 square foot warehouse/garage. The site is in central Danbury, immediately west of Kohanza Brook. The property was used by a series of hat manufacturers from the late nineteenth century until 1952. After this time, the site was used for various services and retail business until 1992, when the property was abandoned after a fire destroyed the main building. The City acquired the site through foreclosure and now seeks to redevelop it. Phase I through III environmental assessments have been conducted, resulting in the discovery of hat felt wastes and mercury, co-mingled with petroleum hydrocarbons. The investigations indicate that

PILOT SNAPSHOT



Danbury, Connecticut

Date of Award: July 1997

Amount: $45,000

Site Profile: The Pilot targets a one half-acre property in the City's urban center that was used by a series of hat manufacturers until the 1950s then used for various services and retail business.

Contacts:

Jack S. Kozuchowski
Danbury Health and
Housing Department
(203) 797-4625

Bob Cianciarulo
U.S. EPA - Region 1
(617) 573-5778
cianciarulo.bob@
epamail.epa.gov

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volatile organic compound (VOC) levels in groundwater are above State standards, and that soil contamination consists of VOCs, lead, and mercury. The City's redevelopment efforts are currently hindered by the presence of these contaminants.

OBJECTIVES

To facilitate redevelopment, the Pilot intends to conduct further site investigation. The City has established a plan which concurrently pursues the environmental restoration of the site and the commercial redevelopment of the property. The project will demonstrate that municipalities can move forward in the commercial rehabilitation of brownfields by providing an innovative approach to completing the environmental restoration of the site. The plan will take advantage of the varying land use zones applicable to the two parcels within the target site. The City will also seek to use innovative in-situ environmental cleanup technologies for site cleanup. In order to facilitate the redevelopment, the City will temporarily retain ownership over a portion of the property. After further investigation and cleanup, the City will select a redevelopment proposal and convey ownership through a negotiated property transfer agreement.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The Pilot will:

- Conduct an environmental assessment of the site, identifying the groundwater contamination source, and conducting a soil gas survey to determine if volatilization would be an issue for reuse;

- Analyze sediment samples and examine ecological risks to determine the impact to the riverine ecosystem adjacent to the property;

- Conduct a pilot study to determine the feasibility of an in-situ treatment approach for the most highly contaminated soils on the property near Kohanza Brook; and

- Provide a detailed plan with specific cost projections for carrying out the cleanup activities.